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Eve Hepburn and Dan Hough

Regionalist Parties and the Mobilization of Territorial Difference in Germany

WHEN SCHOLARS TALK ABOUT POLITICAL REGIONALISM, THE FEDERAL Republic of Germany (FRG) is not normally the first country that they look at. Although Germany is a federal state and since unification has become more economically, politically and socially diverse, it has not witnessed the rise of overt regionalist actors in the way that states such as Canada, Spain, Italy and Belgium have. Indeed, the German party system has continued to provide effective consensual governments formed by political parties that have been able to appeal to voters across the entire territory of the state. Most studies subsequently appear to assume that political regionalism effectively does not exist in Germany. This analysis neglects the persisting effects of territory on German politics. In particular, it overlooks the key role of regionalist parties in shaping the German party system to reflect the distinct needs of their territorial constituencies.

Political parties in post-war Germany have traditionally been perceived as motors of national integration and protectors of social cohesion. This article argues, however, that the national-federal orientation of parties did not prevent territorial cleavages from taking root within the party system. These cleavages encapsulate a number of dimensions that cut across traditional left–right thinking. Initially, they were predominantly north–south, but with unification in 1990 a new centre–periphery cleavage emerged, not only around regional economic inequalities, but also on issues of culture and identity.¹ New and existing territorial cleavages have been used to cement the position of two regionalist parties in Germany's party system: the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) and, between 1990 and 2005, the eastern German Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS; the PDS

¹ A. Staab, *National Identity in Eastern Germany: Inner Unification or Continued Separation?*, Westport, CT, Praeger, 1998; J. Grix and P. Cooke (eds), *East German Distinctiveness in a Unified Germany*, Birmingham, Birmingham University Press, 2003.

mutated into the Left Party – Die Linke – in 2007, by which point it had definitively ceased to be a regionalist party).² A comparison of these two parties and their territorial strategies enables us to develop not just a greater understanding of the parties' respective successes in Bavaria and eastern Germany, but also of the general methods by which regionalist parties cement their positions in national party systems.

Both the Bavarian CSU and the eastern German PDS have sought to represent the interests of their territories within the FRG.³ The concept of 'territorial interests' has a number of dimensions, including not only in constitutional and symbolic demands for more powers and autonomy, but also in the form of economic and political concessions from the state and representation in federal bodies. In particular, German regionalist parties have conceptualized and constructed the issue of territory in different ways – one in national-cultural terms, the other by developing a narrative of socio-economic dislocation and enforced cultural adaptation. Yet, although there are profound differences in the ideological orientation, voter base, economic strategies and self-determination goals of these two parties, they are united by their common desire to empower their territory in Germany. This persistence of political regionalism raises an important question: how were the CSU and PDS able to succeed in pursuing their territorial interests in a federal party system seemingly closed to 'particularism'? In other words, what factors explain their success?

² Using precise terminology when analysing the development of the PDS and Left Party can be difficult and cumbersome. This is largely because the party changed its name from the PDS to the Left Party in the run-up to the 2005 election and then, technically speaking, merged with another party (WASG) in 2007 – even though it kept precisely the same name as it had in the period before. For the purposes of clarity and consistency we use the term PDS throughout. We do this for the simple reason that we are predominantly interested in discussing the PDS's development during its existence as an unambiguously regionalist political party (i.e. 1990–2005). For an analysis of the PDS's development into the Left Party see J. Olsen, 'The Merger of the PDS and WASG: From Eastern German Regional Party to National Radical Left Party?', *German Politics*, 16: 2 (2007), pp. 205–21.

³ C. Sutherland, '"Nation, Heimat, Vaterland": The Reinvention of Concepts by the Bavarian CSU Party', *German Politics*, 10: 3 (2001), pp. 13–36; D. Hough, '"Made in Eastern Germany": The PDS and the Articulation of Eastern German Interests', *German Politics*, 9: 2 (2000), pp. 125–48.

This article seeks to answer this question by exploring the ways in which the CSU and PDS have sought to mobilize territorial difference in post-war Germany. It begins with a theoretical discussion of political regionalism and regionalist parties, in order to consider how the CSU and PDS may be categorized. This entails an examination of the core goals of the regionalist parties – in particular, a commitment to territorial self-empowerment and the pursuit of territorial interests (be they economic, political or cultural) at different levels of the state. This section also explores several ‘determinants’ of regionalist party success that have been put forward in the literature, with a view to testing these determinants in these cases.

The subsequent section explores the two case studies in more detail, accounting for the emergence and consolidation of the CSU and PDS in their respective territories, the modernization and transformation of these parties into multilevel political players, and their efforts to influence politics at the centre. Following this analysis, we test the determinants of success identified by several scholars in these two cases. We also identify other factors that have contributed to the success of these parties in Germany, including the federalist and regionalist orientation of the parties and their development of partnerships and coalitions at the federal level and the weakness of state-wide parties in playing the territorial card. The article then concludes with a discussion of the future opportunities for regionalist mobilization in the reformed German federal system.

REGIONALIST PARTIES IN GERMANY

Most analyses of sub-state regionalist parties do not include any from Germany.⁴ This is a curious oversight, given that two of the most successful regionalist parties in Europe operate(d) in the FRG: the CSU and PDS. The CSU describes itself as a Bavarian party that seeks to advance Bavarian interests and influence in the FRG, whose lineage can be traced back to the Bayerische Patrioten (Bavarian Patriots) in the mid-nineteenth century. Until the mid-2000s the PDS,

⁴ S. Newman, *Ethnoregional Conflict in Democracies: Mostly Ballots, Rarely Bullets*, Westport, CT, Greenwood, 1996; L. De Winter and H. Türsan (eds), *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*, London and New York, Routledge, 1998; L. De Winter, M. Gómez-Reino and P. Lynch (eds), *Autonomist Parties in Europe: Identity Politics and the Revival of the Territorial Cleavage*, Barcelona, Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials, 2006.

meanwhile, was a protectionist party, seeking to protect and enhance the interests of eastern Germans without demanding a reconfiguration of state institutions. How might we categorize these parties? First it is necessary to explain what we mean when we talk about regionalism and regionalist parties.

One of the most authoritative accounts of regionalist parties is offered by Lieven De Winter and Huri Türsan.⁵ In their landmark study of 'ethnoregionalist parties', the authors identify two common denominators uniting members of the regionalist party family: (1) a sub-national territorial border and (2) an exclusive group identity. These two aspects create a sense of community and a people united by kinship, affinity and attachment that may be mobilized for political ends.⁶ Regionalist parties seek to develop an identification with a given territory, and to mobilize regional interests and resources around it. The central aim of these parties is, according to Türsan, the 'political reorganisation of the national power structure'.⁷ De Winter et al. offer a convincing explanation for the inexorable rise of regionalist parties.⁸ They argue that parties representing regional or local interests have been able to capitalize on latent popular discontent with distant forms of authority and established political elites by demanding more control over resources and decision-making. Along with green parties and radical right parties, regionalist parties have been among the main beneficiaries of voter alienation from, and frustration with, mainstream state-wide parties in Western European democracies. Recent literature in this area has sought to expand on De Winter and Türsan's pioneering study. Hepburn, for example, argued that the common aim of regionalist parties should include not only self-determination and the constitutional restructuring of the state, but also the general aim of 'territorial empowerment', which involves seeking to advance the political, socio-economic and cultural interests of the territory.⁹ Others have also begun to look beyond autonomy as their defining characteristic, as some regionalist parties prefer to make territorial economic concessions, cultural

⁵ De Winter and Türsan, *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*.

⁶ L. Snyder, *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*, New York, Paragon House, 1990.

⁷ H. Türsan, 'Introduction: Ethnoregionalist Parties as Ethnic Entrepreneurs', in De Winter and Türsan, *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*, p. 6.

⁸ De Winter et al., *Autonomist Parties in Europe*, p. 14.

⁹ E. Hepburn, 'Introduction: Re-Conceptualizing Sub-State Mobilization', *Regional and Federal Studies*, 19: 4-5 (2009), p. 482.

recognition or linguistic rights their main goal.¹⁰ In short – and this is a definition we follow – regionalist parties are characterized by their concentration on defending regional interests; this is something that both the CSU and the PDS plainly do.

Yet regionalist parties clearly take on a variety of guises. In particular, Keating provides a useful overview of the various forms that regional mobilization might take.¹¹ He identifies several types of ‘bottom-up’ movements, including: ‘conservative regionalism’, which defends regional traditions against the modernizing state; ‘bourgeois regionalism’, which seeks to modernize and free itself from a traditionalist state; ‘left-wing progressive regionalism’, which endorses the themes of democracy, equality and progress; ‘right-wing populist regionalism’, which is opposed to the state draining its resources; ‘cultural regionalism’, based on the protection of local cultures or languages; and ‘minority nationalism’, based on a historical homeland and the desire for self-determination.¹²

Can the CSU and PDS indeed be characterized as regionalist parties? And what kind of regionalism do they stand for? On the first issue, the CSU and PDS (until 2005) both sought to represent a specific territory in Germany that has a delineated territorial border and a sense of group identity (Bavaria and eastern Germany respectively). While Bavaria was the only large historical political entity whose boundaries had survived the Second World War in 1945, the borders of eastern Germany were defined in an even more robust way: they belonged to a separate state until unification in 1990. The historical experience of independent statehood for both Bavarians and eastern Germans led to a strong sense of identity (even if East-erners only really grasped this once their state had gone) that was distinct from the rest of Germany.¹³

The CSU seeks, and the PDS sought, to mobilize this identity and sense of difference in their respective territories by aiming to

¹⁰ C. Jeffery, ‘New Research Agendas on Regional Party Competition’, *Regional and Federal Studies*, 19: 4–5 (2009), pp. 639–50.

¹¹ M. Keating, ‘The Invention of Regions: Political Restructuring and Territorial Government in Western Europe’, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 15: 4 (1997), pp. 383–98; M. Keating, *The New Regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial Restructuring and Political Change*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 1998.

¹² Keating, ‘The Invention of Regions’.

¹³ Sutherland, “‘Nation, Heimat, Vaterland’”; Grix and Cooke, *East German Distinctiveness*.

represent and advance the interests of their regions in the FRG. While this took the form of demanding greater decentralization of state powers for the CSU, for the PDS this meant seeking a 'better deal' for eastern Germans in the newly unified FRG.¹⁴ In accordance with Keating's classification, the CSU would therefore represent a mix of bourgeois, right-wing and cultural regionalism that seeks to protect local cultures, traditions and monies from threats of state centralization and globalization. The PDS comprised a mix of left-wing and conservative regionalism, by looking to defend eastern German traditions while at the same time endorsing themes of equality and democracy. Another way to characterize these parties is by distinguishing the autonomist regionalism of the CSU from the protectionist regionalism of the PDS. As well as having different territorial aims, the CSU and PDS are ideological opposites: while the CSU is a right-wing Christian conservative party, the PDS was a left-wing (nominally socialist) party that has recently developed a more libertarian strand.

As well as seeking to understand what types of regionalisms exist, it is also important to identify what the conditions of success are for regionalist parties. Several scholars have endeavoured to identify which factors are most important in determining the success of these parties. To begin with, Tarrow usefully distinguishes between internal and external resources that are available for regionalist mobilization.¹⁵ Internal resources comprise a strong party leadership, a cohesive and professional organization and group solidarity as well as a sense of common purpose, while external resources include the party's access to the political system, the existence of influential allies and partners, and the degree of political alignment in the system. Müller-Rommel refines these factors to highlight the importance of a strong membership base and an open and flexible party organization, a skilled leader and a lack of factionalism as the main internal resources for a regionalist party.¹⁶ With regard to external resources, he identifies the presence of decentralized structures of

¹⁴ E. Hepburn, 'The Neglected Nation: The CSU and the Territorial Cleavage in Bavarian Party Politics', *German Politics*, 17: 2 (2008), pp. 184–202; D. Hough and M. Koss, 'A Regional(ist) Party in Denial? The German PDS and its Arrival in Unified Germany', *Regional and Federal Studies*, 19: 4–5 (2009), pp. 579–93.

¹⁵ S. Tarrow, *Power in Movements*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

¹⁶ F. Müller-Rommel, 'Ethnoregionalist Parties in Western Europe: Theoretical Considerations and Framework of Analysis', in De Winter and Türsan, *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*.

decision-making, a dealigned party system that is open to 'new politics' and the presence of influential pro-regionalist allies. These six 'determinants of success' were tested on regionalist parties operating in several countries of Western Europe (including Belgium, Spain, Italy, the UK and France) and summarized by De Winter.¹⁷ As stated above, though, Germany is not on this list. We will try to explore whether the variables identified by Tarrow and Müller-Rommel can determine why regionalism remains such a successful movement in Germany, and also whether factors beyond the Tarrow/Müller-Rommel framework may be more help in explaining the success of the CSU and PDS in Bavaria and eastern Germany, respectively.

SPECIAL REGIONS? BAVARIAN AND EAST GERMAN INTEGRATION IN THE FRG

Although the German constitution does not grant any *Land* 'special' status in the way that, say, the Spanish or Italian ones do, it is clear that both Bavaria and eastern Germany have unique histories that require some sort of practical acknowledgement. According to the official Bavarian state website, Bavaria constitutes 'one of the oldest European states'. Scholars have traced a long historical lineage, starting with the establishment of a Bavarian dukedom in AD 554, and later its transformation into a kingdom by the grace of Napoleon in 1806. After the Wars of German Unification of 1866–71, Bavaria became absorbed into a German Empire dominated by Bismarck, which created a strong sense of resentment of 'Prussia' that persists to this day.¹⁸ This came to an end in November 1918 with the establishment of a Bavarian *Freistaat* by Kurt Eisner's Independent Socialist Party, which terminated quickly and violently. This episode in Bavarian history cemented a distrust of socialism, with Bavarians soon going to the opposite extreme by supporting Hitler's Nazi Party. After the capitulation of the German army in 1945, Bavaria came under the control of an American military government. The lack of a solid

¹⁷ L. De Winter, 'Conclusion: A Comparative Analysis of the Electoral, Office and Policy Success of Ethnoregionalist Parties', in De Winter and Türsan, *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*.

¹⁸ S. Padgett and T. Burkett, *Political Parties and Elections in West Germany: The Search for a New Stability*, London, C. Hurst, 1986, p. 115.

German political structure at this time gave Bavaria the opportunity to establish its autonomy by creating a Bavarian constitution that celebrated Bavaria's thousand-year history, tradition of statehood and sense of identity.¹⁹ When Bavaria became a *Land* in the FRG in 1949, it was furnished with a constitutional court, government, parliament and second chamber, and at the same time was firmly rooted in federal political structures through its representation in the Bundesrat.

In constitutional terms, East Germany, on the other hand, does not exist at all. There is no *Land* called 'eastern Germany', and it has no direct political, economic or cultural representation. Indeed, following the opening of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, it took a mere 10 months to eradicate the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from the political map completely. The GDR was replaced by five new *Länder* and Berlin as Germany became one state again. East Germans were, for the most part, happy that 'their' state had gone and were looking forward to a peaceful and prosperous future in the FRG. As is widely known, however, the process of integrating eastern Germany into the federal republic has been anything other than straightforward. Economic data from the east have been persistently worse than in the west; unemployment rates are higher, levels of economic growth are lower and easterners remain much less satisfied both with the process and outputs of German democracy.²⁰ Eastern Germans also quickly became aware that political, economic and cultural life in the new state worked to a western agenda, and in a matter of months Easterners were articulating their unhappiness with their respective positions in this new polity. Indeed, although there was never any such thing as a 'GDR identity', once East Germany ceased to exist Easterners did indeed come to identify with fellow citizens who had lived there, been socialized into the GDR's structures and had witnessed (from the inside, as it were) the process of transformation that had followed its collapse.²¹ This disjointed and

¹⁹ P. James, *The Politics of Bavaria*, Aldershot, Avebury, 1995.

²⁰ M. Münter and R. Sturm, 'Economic Consequences of German Unification', *German Politics*, 11: 3 (2002), pp. 179–94; W. Gellner and G. Strohmeier, 'The "Double" Public: Germany after Reunification', *German Politics*, 11: 3 (2002), pp. 59–82; R. J. Dalton and S. Weldon, 'Germans Divided? Political Culture in a United Germany', *German Politics*, 19: 1 (2010), pp. 9–23.

²¹ J. Grix, 'East German Political Attitudes: Socialist Legacies v. Situational Factors: A False Antithesis', *German Politics*, 9: 2(2000), pp. 109–24.

destabilizing process of integrating the two states was, when coupled with the experience of living in the GDR, a strong facilitator of a sense of eastern ‘differentness’ and the basis on which PDS success was to be built.

THE CSU: AUTONOMIST REGIONALISM

Bavaria’s historical and cultural distinctiveness before the creation of the FRG has had a significant impact on its post-war party system development. In order to protect its special interests and identity, Bavaria has consistently provided an independent voice in German affairs, by advocating a more decentralized model of federalism as a solution to Germany’s organizational difficulties.²² This position has been consistently upheld by Bavaria’s ‘party of state’ – the CSU.

The CSU was established in 1945 following the collapse of the Third Reich. Although a new party, the CSU embodied an important strand of Bavarian Christian-conservative political thinking, whose previous representatives had been the Bavarian Patriotic Party (BPP), the Bavarian Centre Party and the Bavarian People’s Party (BVP) – the latter of which had been active until the fall of the Weimar Republic. The CSU was therefore part of a long political tradition that emphasized Bavarian patriotism and Christian values. Because of the importance of Bavarianism to the party’s self-understanding, the first proposed name for the party was actually the Bavarian Christian Social Union (although the prefix was abandoned to appease the anti-regionalist US military government). In any case, the aims of the CSU were clear: to protect Bavaria’s special interests, unique identity and culture and political autonomy by supporting a strong type of federalism based on the decentralization of powers, greater regional policy autonomy and a powerful Bundesrat. The CSU constructs Bavaria as a nation (*Heimat*) in its own right, and argues that this specialness should be recognized in Germany.²³

²² D. R. Dorondo, *Bavaria and German Federalism. Reich to Republic, 1918–33, 1945–49*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1992.

²³ Sutherland, ‘“Nation, Heimat, Vaterland”’; G. Ford, ‘Constructing a Regional Identity: The Christian Social Union and Bavaria’s Common Heritage, 1949–62’, *Contemporary European History*, 16: 3 (2007), pp. 277–97; Hepburn, ‘The Neglected Nation’.

Following intense competition in the pursuit of these aims with a nationalist rival, the Bayernpartei (BP), which entered the Bavarian Landtag in 1954–57 and made a significant dent in CSU support, the CSU then underwent a radical transformation in the 1950s and 1960s.²⁴ It created a broad organizational sub-structure by setting up local offices in almost every municipality, centralizing the party machine, establishing a weekly party newspaper, the *Bayernkurier*, and founding a party research institute, the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung in Munich. The party's reorganization allowed it to transform itself into a modern catch-all party and win back its support. As a result, the CSU has governed Bavaria since 1957 (and without coalition partners from 1966 to 2008).

During the 1960s, the CSU solidified its support base through its economic policies. The CSU implemented radical economic reforms to hasten the post-war industrialization in Bavaria, which focused on 'harmonizing progress with traditional structures'. This meant that the sudden expansion of a modern industrial society would not destroy Bavaria's traditional economic sectors. Rather, the CSU encouraged farmers, traders, artisans and small businesses to continue unchanged, and even introduced subsidies and tax concessions for those who chose to continue the 'old' Bavarian way of life.²⁵ The CSU had to be skilful to appeal to two quite different clienteles – a backward-looking, rural one and an emerging, more-progressive urban group. Subsidizing the agricultural group would have left no resources to develop a modern industrial base in Bavaria. The CSU therefore cannily supported the development of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as it allowed the CSU to pass the costs of agricultural support on to the European level while developing high-tech industry in Bavaria. Performing this balancing act proved to be a political masterstroke. The CSU's role in managing the Bavarian economy subsequently allowed it to accommodate farmers and property-owners, as well as the new classes of blue-collar

²⁴ A. Mintzel, 'The Christian Social Union in Bavaria: Analytical Notes on its Development, Role and Political Success', in M. Kaase and K. von Beyme (eds), *Elections and Parties*, London, Sage, 1978, p. 204.

²⁵ A. Mintzel, 'Political and Socio-Economic Developments in the Postwar Era: The Case of Bavaria 1945–1989', in K. Rohe (ed.), *Elections, Parties and Political Traditions. Social Foundations of German Parties and German Party Systems 1867–1987*, New York and Oxford, Berg, 1990.

and white-collar workers that would form the electoral backbone of the CSU's success.

In addition to the CSU's appeal to several social strata in Bavaria, the CSU also sought to expand its support base to cover all of the sub-regions in the *Land*. Bavaria contains three large sub-regional cultures that date back to the mid-nineteenth century: Swabia, Franconia and Old Bavaria. At first, the CSU focused on the Catholic conservative heartland of Old Bavaria, which had a sense of national identity that was resisted in the liberal Reich-oriented regions of Swabia and Franconia.²⁶ Yet the CSU looked to bridge the socio-cultural (and confessional) divide between the patriotic Catholic south and federalist Protestant north in its aim to become the dominant party in a unified Bavaria.²⁷ The CSU was able for the first time ever to create a single Bavarian political culture while still acknowledging the diversity of the historical sub-regional identities.²⁸

An important appeal for the party was its strong leadership. Most importantly, Franz Josef Strauss (fondly known by his initials FJS) was the 'man who for over a quarter of a century had been the uncrowned king of Bavaria [who] was also described as the personality who divided the Federal Republic more than any other German politician: admired by some, feared by others'.²⁹ FJS, whose father was a member of the Bavarian BVP, became CSU general secretary in 1948, federal minister of defence in 1956–62, chairman of the CSU in 1961–88, federal minister of finance in 1966–69, president of the Bundesrat in 1983–84 and minister-president of Bavaria from 1978 until his death in 1988. He is credited with modernizing the party in the 1950s, developing the CSU's and Bavaria's image both at home and abroad, and advancing the *Doppelrolle* of the party through his influence in federal politics. FJS viewed himself 'as a man of the people . . . often putting in an appearance at the Munich Oktoberfest

²⁶ C. Carl-Sime, 'Bavaria, the CSU and the West German Party System', *West European Politics*, 2 (1979), pp. 89–107; A. Mintzel, 'Specificities of Bavarian Political Culture', in D. Berg-Schlosser and R. Rytlewski (eds), *Political Culture in Germany*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1993.

²⁷ Ford, 'Constructing a Regional Identity'.

²⁸ Mintzel, 'Specificities of Bavarian Political Culture', p. 109; Sutherland '“Nation, Heimat, Vaterland”'.

²⁹ P. James, 'Franz Josef Strauß: Lasting Legacy or Transitory Phenomenon?', *German Politics*, 7: 2 (1998), pp. 200–2.

or at parties wearing fancy dress during the carnival season'.³⁰ His ebullience was also partly his failing. After being involved in a number of political controversies, FJS never got the job he really wanted: federal chancellor. When he stood in the 1980 election as the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)/CSU candidate, many CDU party members opined that the Social Democratic Party (SPD) candidate Helmut Schmidt would make a better chancellor, while Strauss had to speak behind bullet-proof glass when making a campaign tour of the Ruhr area.³¹

Clearly, the CSU did not seek to restrict its activities and demands to the Bavarian party political arena, or to become a 'provincial' party with little power as some of its predecessors (BPP and BVP) and its early competitors (Bavarian Party) had. Instead, it developed a dual role as both a Bavarian regionalist party and a German federalist party. Through negotiations with the CDU in 1947–49, the CSU was able to participate in federal politics as part of the Christian democratic parliamentary group, and to fill Cabinet posts in CDU/CSU governments during 1949–69, 1982–98 and since 2005. At the same time, the CSU has been able to maintain its full independence, which is manifested in its separate party programmes and congresses, organizational and membership structures and the existence of a CSU *Landesgruppe* in the Bundestag. Both parties agreed not to contest elections outside their territories (Bavaria for the CSU and the rest of Germany for the CDU), and the CSU became known as the *Schwesterpartei* (sister party) to the CDU. Mintzel has described the CSU's position as an autonomous *Land* party with a federal function as a *Doppelrolle*.³² The fact that the CSU is a quasi-federal party allows it to punch above its weight in the federal political arena. Its relationship with the CDU endows it with a political significance that extends far beyond Bavaria. Indeed, the CSU has long been the third political force in federal politics.

The success of the CSU in transforming itself into an inter-confessional, modern, professional *Volkspartei* (catch-all party), with local organizations in almost every municipality in Bavaria and a political reach that extends to Berlin, has meant that it has been able to win on average 50–60 per cent of the popular vote in *Land*, federal

³⁰ Ibid., p. 205

³¹ James, *The Politics of Bavaria*, p. 3.

³² Mintzel, 'Political and Socio-Economic Developments in the Postwar Era'.

and European elections since 1969. This has created enormous difficulties for other parties trying to break the CSU stronghold. In particular, there is thus a lack of Bavarian identification with non-CSU parties. The SPD, the Free Democratic Party of German (FDP) and Greens have failed to articulate an alternative vision of Bavaria, and to convince voters that they would stand up for Bavarian interests in the FRG.³³ In particular, the position of Bavaria's main opposition party, the SPD, is described as 'hopeless' by Mintzel.³⁴ As a result, state-wide parties have only been able to scrape together 30–40 per cent of the vote in Bavarian elections, making little dent in the CSU's electoral capital.

Although the CSU lost its overall majority in the 2008 *Land* election, which forced it into a coalition government with the FDP, this was not due to any burgeoning support for state-wide parties such as the SPD (whose share of the vote declined). Instead, the CSU's electoral decline (its vote share decreased from 60.7 per cent in the 2003 election to 43 per cent in 2008) may be attributable to the success of a breakaway party of disillusioned supporters – the Freie Wähler (Free Voters) party, which gained 11.1 per cent of the vote in 2008.³⁵ One reason for the CSU's poor results was the lack of strong and inspiring leadership in the 2008 election, as the formidable and popular Edmund Stoiber, who had been minister-president and party chairman from 2002 to 2007, was replaced by two men – Günther Beckstein as state premier and Erwin Huber as party chairman – neither of whom was especially charismatic. Although the CSU now has a new leader, Horst Seehofer, it is too soon to tell if and how the CSU will be able to regain its disenchanted voters.

THE PDS: PROTECTIONIST REGIONALISM

The PDS grew out of a dictatorial and inherently anti-democratic predecessor – the GDR's Socialist Unity Party (SED). The SED was formed in the Soviet Zone of Occupation in 1946 following a forced

³³ E. Hepburn, *Using Europe: Territorial Party Strategies in a Multi-Level System*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010.

³⁴ A. Mintzel, *Die CSU-Hegemonie in Bayern: Strategie und Erfolg; Gewinner und Verlierer*, Passau, Wiss.-Verl. Rothe, 1999, p. 115.

³⁵ P. James, 'End of an Era? The Landtagswahl in Bavaria, September 2008', *German Politics*, 18: 1 (2009), pp. 103–9.

merger between the Communist Party and the Social Democrats. It governed the GDR continuously until March 1990, when it finally lost its position of power in the first and last free elections that East Germany experienced. The SED's position as communism began to crumble was, therefore, anything but advantageous. As the GDR imploded in the weeks and months after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the party leaders began to grasp that radical changes in ideology, organization and policy were necessary if the SED were to survive in post-unification Germany. Indeed, survival – nothing more – was the best option, and in late 1989 and early 1990 the SED set out on an uneasy and disjointed process of reform with precisely this aim in mind.

The SED quickly called an extraordinary conference for the 8–9 and 16–17 December 1989 to discuss the future of the party. Amidst all of the confusion, one question rose above all others in importance and came to dominate discussions: should the SED disband completely and re-convene as a different organization, under another name, as free as possible from the ideological ballast of the GDR, or should it reform itself (again perhaps under another name) in an attempt to act as a bridge of continuity between the 'old' GDR and the 'new' GDR that many believed was developing?³⁶ The majority of delegates opted for the latter option. On 17 December 1989, therefore, tired and dispirited delegates chose to adopt a new, transitional, name – the SED/PDS.³⁷

The lifespan of the SED/PDS was short: at the executive meeting of 4 February 1990 the party was renamed again – this time simply to the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). This, the leadership hoped, would bring discussions about the PDS's previous life as the SED to an end; unsurprisingly, they were very much mistaken. If questions of the future party name dominated early debates in the party, issues of ideological orientation, programmatic purity and policy detail soon took them over. Programmes were fought over and discussed in impassioned debates, ensuring that policy development was both piecemeal and, for the most part, decidedly disjointed. Communists argued with social democrats, Marxists with socialists. Such was the

³⁶ F. Oswald, *The Party that Came Out of the Cold War: The Party of Democratic Socialism in United Germany*, London, Praeger, 2002.

³⁷ P. Barker, 'From the SED to the PDS: Continuity or Renewal?', in *German Monitor: The Party of Democratic Socialism. Modern Post-Communism or Nostalgic Populism?*, Amsterdam, Rodopi B.V., 1998, vol. 42, pp. 1–17.

ideological diversity evident in the debate that not only was it hard for the leadership to steer, but also at times it was difficult even to follow what exactly was going on.

Programmatic development subsequently took place in a series of waves through the 1990s; initially it remained quite rigid and the focus was on distancing the party from the excesses of the GDR in 1990, before offering more space to ideological conservatives and critics of (west German) capitalism in the years between 1991 and 1998. This was the era of formulaic compromises before a group of 'modern socialists', keen on stabilizing the PDS as a reforming force to the left of the SPD, came out on top in the run-up to the 1998 federal election.³⁸ Thoughts of reviewing and renewing the party programme following that election prompted more introversion and introspection, leading to an eventual crisis after 2002 as the party slipped out of the Bundestag before (unexpectedly) returning as the Left Party in 2005.

The PDS's programmatic aims through the 1990s were subsequently twofold. On the one hand it sought to open itself up to all progressive radicals and to offer a prospective home to all elements of the anti-capitalist left. Inclusion – stretching from communists to social democrats (around the short-lived 'Social Democratic Platform') – was the aim. On the other hand, the PDS realized that it would have to come to some sort of programmatic accommodation with the structures and processes of Germany's social market economy in order to be allowed to exist by the constitutional watchdog, the Bundesverfassungsschutz. It could no longer condemn capitalism as being purely evil, and it subsequently accepted the rule of law and parliamentary democracy, and rejected the democratic sham that had existed in the GDR. It had to find a way of being constructively critical while being unambiguously clear that it did not want to overthrow Germany's constitutional settlement – no easy task.

In the months and years immediately following unification, the PDS had no coherent political agenda; its programme was both vague and at times contradictory, and it appeared unable to influence the wider political environment around it. It certainly seems plausible that, had eastern Germany blossomed into the 'flourishing economic landscape' that Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl had promised, the

³⁸ D. Hough, J. Olsen and M. Koss, *The Left Party in Contemporary German Politics*, London, Palgrave, 2007.

PDS would have drifted, as the cadre gradually died away, into non-existence. Yet, by the end of 1991, and increasingly thereafter, the fallout from unification was beginning to disillusion many eastern Germans, and new and unexpected electoral potential was developing for the party. The perceived arrogance of western politicians, the apparent annexation (although initially approved) of eastern Germany and the blatant lack of regard for most things ‘East German’ led many to feel that they were strangers in their own land.³⁹ The PDS sensed that things might not be as bleak for the party as was first believed, and sought to develop a new role for itself as the articulator of dissatisfied sections of the eastern German electorate.⁴⁰ The PDS became – perhaps more through luck than judgement – the representative of disgruntled citizens in eastern Germany. The effects of having lived under state socialism, as well as having experienced the difficult transition from socialism to capitalism, prompted a significant number of Easterners to re-identify with both eastern Germany and with other eastern Germans – and with the PDS as a political voice, albeit a rather peculiar one. The enduring material and psychological differences between eastern and western Germany that the PDS was able to articulate helped it expand on its steady bedrock of former functionary support. The PDS was seen to have gone through the same difficult process of getting used to, and being coldly shunned by, the new state that many Easterners perceived themselves as also having undergone. It subsequently became the mouthpiece of the disaffected in the new *Länder*.

By the mid-1990s, the SPD realized both that the PDS was going to be a long-term presence and also that it was slowly developing more pragmatic and less ideologically extreme programmatic stances. Indeed, those on the left of the SPD saw the option of bringing the PDS into the coalition equation in the sub-state arena in eastern Germany as being an ideal opportunity to broaden their own strategic options.⁴¹ The SPD in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt was tempted to take the PDS up on its offer of acting as a support party to the SPD/Green coalition. Controversial though this arrangement was, the government performed reasonably well and by 2001 the PDS

³⁹ G. K. Roberts, ‘“Emigrants in Their Own Country”: German Reunification and its Political Consequences’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 44 (1991), pp. 373–88.

⁴⁰ Hough ‘“Made in Eastern Germany”’.

⁴¹ C. Lees, ‘Bringing the PDS into the Coalition Equation’, *German Politics*, 4: 1 (1995), pp. 150–4.

was in government – and this time in a genuine coalition – in two other eastern states (Mecklenburg Western Pomerania and Berlin). Even if it was virtually non-existent in the west, the PDS was on the road to being a ‘normal’ party in the east. It was now polling between 15 and 25 per cent of the vote, and for a significant number of easterners – supporters and critics alike – it had become a normal actor in eastern German politics. The PDS’s poor electoral performance in the federal election of 2002 (4 per cent, and only two seats in the federal parliament) was undoubtedly a setback, but the party remained a clear, articulate and effective representative of eastern German-ness in each of the eastern state parliaments. This continues to be the case now, even if the PDS has metamorphosed into a state-wide actor in the form of the Left Party.⁴²

CONDITIONS OF REGIONALIST SUCCESS IN GERMANY

Regionalist parties in Bavaria and eastern Germany have subsequently exhibited remarkable resilience and growth in post-war Germany. Not only have they established a permanent core voter base in their ‘homelands’, but they have also extended their political activities throughout the rest of Germany. This is a remarkable achievement for political actors representing a narrow set of regional interests in a country so seemingly opposed to ‘particularism’. In this section we seek to determine what the main factors explaining the success of these parties have been. As stated above, various determinants of success have been identified by scholars of regionalist parties focusing on Western European states. To recap, these are: a strong party leadership, a cohesive organization, group solidarity, party access to the political system, the existence of influential allies and partners, and the stability of political alignments in the party system.⁴³ To what extent do these variables correspond to the success of regionalist parties in Germany?

To begin with internal resources, strong and charismatic leadership appears to be an important aspect in both of the cases. The CSU has always been heavily identified with its leading politicians –

⁴² Hough et al., *The Left Party in Contemporary German Politics*.

⁴³ Tarrow, *Power in Movements*; Müller-Rommel, ‘Ethnoregionalist Parties in Western Europe’.

especially FJS, who was seen as the father-figure of the CSU. Although FJS's immediate successors, Max Streibl and Theo Waigel, were not charismatic enough to 'take over the "myth" created by Strauss', Edmund Stoiber – who led the party and the region from 2002 until 2007 – was able to develop a strong leadership position, allowing him regularly to win 60 per cent of the vote in Bavarian elections.⁴⁴ The PDS, on the other hand, would not have survived without the sharp tongue and quick-witted charisma of Berlin lawyer Gregor Gysi. Gysi rose rapidly through the party ranks in the final months of 1989, and his ability to enthuse and energize the PDS's grassroots membership was vital in keeping the party together in 1989, 1990 and 1991. Remarkably, Gysi also had the ability to speak not only to party members, but also to the wider electorate. He regularly painted a picture of western German dominance over a beleaguered and put-upon eastern German citizenry, and he quickly became one of the FRG's most recognizable political figures. Indeed, Gysi still remains leader of the Left Party's parliamentary party in the federal legislature, and his mastery of the one-liner did much to help the PDS shed its image as a party of yesteryear.

With regard to the second variable, that of party organization, many commentators see the CSU's organizational transformation in the mid-1950s as a key to its success. In particular, the decision to overhaul the party's structures and create a professional bureaucracy allowed the CSU to replace many of the older clerical conservatives with a younger generation of committed, pragmatic politicians.⁴⁵ The PDS has also benefited from being, for much of the 1990s at least, the party with the most members in eastern Germany. It also cleverly used its ageing membership to its advantage, with many PDS supporters who had taken early retirement putting in hours and hours of work knocking on doors and distributing information. Indeed, the '*Turbo-rentner*', the groups of highly motivated 'turbo-pensioners' who willingly manned information stands and supported the party's events were the envy of all of the other parties who competed in the eastern states.

⁴⁴ C. Wagemann, 'Once Again the Deviant Case? Why the *Christlich-Soziale Union* Only Partially Fulfills the Image of an "Alpine Populist Party"', in D. Caramani and Y. Mény (eds), *Challenges to Consensual Politics: Democracy, Identity and Populist Protest in the Alpine Region*, Brussels, Peter Lang, 2005, p. 180.

⁴⁵ Ford, 'Constructing a Regional Identity', p. 286.

The third internal factor identified by Tarrow and Müller-Rommel is that of group solidarity. In the case of the CSU, early divisions between a more liberal-conservative federalist strand and a more radical-conservative autonomist strand in the 1950s caused many members of the CSU to move to the Bayernpartei, thus guaranteeing the BP's success in the 1954 election. Since the transformation in the late 1950s, though, there have been very few signs of factionalism. In the case of the PDS, there is more evidence of divergent opinions within the party, and this indeed almost caused the party to implode in 2002–3. During the 1990s – the period when it was most obviously a regionalist party – the importance of defending eastern German interests consistently prompted politicians and members alike to present a united front to the outside world. Indeed, the PDS struggled in the early 2000s – precisely the era when it could not show genuine group solidarity.

Moving on to external resources, the fourth variable – party access to the political system – has not been a problem for regionalist parties in Germany as the federal structure of the state has created decentralized structures of decision-making that have enabled parties to enter parliament and government at the *Land* level (as long as they overcome the '5 per cent' hurdle to winning seats in the Landtag). Both the CSU and PDS have entered regional parliaments as well as regional governments in Bavaria (for the CSU) and Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (for the PDS).⁴⁶ A fifth factor identified in the literature is the existence of influential allies. Here, however, neither the CSU nor PDS has engaged with other regionalist parties or pro-regionalist allies (as stipulated by Müller-Rommel), although both have engaged in partnerships with state-wide parties (see below). Finally, scholars have pointed to the importance of a dealigned party system that is open to 'new politics' for regionalist party success. While this was not a condition of success for the CSU, which began winning absolute majorities during a period in which the German party was highly stable, the dealignment of party politics following reunification was a factor in the success of the PDS as it made use of the virgin electoral territory of the five eastern *Länder* and Berlin.

⁴⁶ The PDS has, as has already been noted, also acted as a support party in Saxony-Anhalt (1994–2002). The PDS's successor, the Left Party, also entered government in another eastern state, Brandenburg, in 2009.

Clearly, some factors identified by Tarrow and Müller-Rommel hold more explanatory power than others. Leadership, party organization, lack of factionalism and decentralized structures of decision-making were important elements (to varying extents) in the rise of both the CSU and PDS in their home territories. Yet there are other aspects to the success of regionalist parties in Germany that these authors have not accounted for. In particular, the main determinant of regionalist party success in the FRG appears to be the ability of parties to maintain both a regionalist and a federalist orientation. The CSU and PDS place(d) great importance on having influence on federal politics and shaping the political agenda. This aspect of the parties' goals is especially important in understanding why the PDS and CSU, as 'regionalist parties', must also develop a federalist orientation in order to succeed in the interlocking structures of the FRG. This two-tiered functioning involves the differentiation of strategies at the *Land* and federal levels, electoral expansion outside their home territories, robust campaigning at the *Land* and federal levels and the development of partnerships/coalitions in national politics. In the case of the latter, the CSU has successfully projected itself on to the German political stage through its federal alliance with the CDU. At the same time, the CSU can claim to be the only party representing Bavaria's special interests. The CSU is first and foremost a Bavarian party whose success has to a great extent been based on the party's direct identification with the Bavarian *Land*. One might consider that, had the CSU not made a pact with the CDU in the immediate post-war period, it is likely that it would have become merely another local Bavarian party and Christian democratic competitor to the CDU. The PDS successfully argued that it represented the sentiments, feelings and interests of a significant proportion of Easterners who felt abandoned by the 'western' parties. The PDS was the self-styled voice of eastern German differentness. Indeed, even Easterners who had no truck with the PDS's history and/or its socialism often begrudgingly accepted that it was skilled at fighting 'the eastern German cause'.

In addition to building both a regionalist and a federalist profile, another factor for success as revealed in the case studies was the inability or weakness of state-wide parties to play the 'regionalist' card. In Bavaria, state-wide parties have been constantly hampered by their inability to shake off the popular perception that they were foreign (un-Bavarian) parties ultimately controlled by Bonn/Berlin. This phenomenon was replicated perfectly in eastern Germany

through the 1990s. While some parties – such as the SPD and Greens – have made concerted efforts to develop a more territorial profile (and in the case of the SPD to try and portray themselves as a Bavarian party standing up for Bavarian interests), others – such as the FDP – have opposed regional ‘particularism’ in any form and are staunchly against recognizing the ‘specialness’ of Bavaria within the FRG. This inability to become distinctive Bavarian parties has hampered the SPD, Greens and FDP in the polls. The same dynamic also existed in the post-1990 eastern states, particularly after the SPD prohibited former SED members from even joining the party in 1989 and 1990. All parties looked to expand their membership bases and to support Easterners in rising through their parties, but none was able to develop a convincing territorial narrative of having experienced the rapid and in many ways tumultuous transformation of the GDR into eastern Germany in the way that the PDS could and did.

These additional variables for explaining the success of the CSU and PDS may also mean that German regionalist parties are slightly different from other regionalist parties in Western Europe (especially from those identified by De Winter and Türsan in their 1998 edited collection). In particular, the PDS and CSU can be categorized as *both* regionalist *and* German parties. Neither of them wishes to deny the existence of the German state; instead, they want to gain more representation of the interests of their territories within it.

CONCLUSION

Although Germany’s territorial integrity may not have been threatened by an independence-seeking nationalist party in the post-war period, the political and economic structures of federalism have been challenged by two regionalist parties with the aim of either seeking greater regional autonomy, or demanding a better economic deal for the region. The German party system has enabled one of these parties – the CSU – to become the third-largest political force in the FRG, while the lack of entrenched voter alignments following reunification in 1990 gave the PDS a chance to become one of the largest political forces in eastern Germany. As a result of their electoral success, German regionalist parties have been able, in their different ways, to influence politics at the regional and federal level in order to represent the distinct needs of their territorial constituencies.

Regionalist parties have become key players in both regional and federal party systems, in some cases (as with the CSU) with direct control over policy-making through federal government ministerial posts, and in other cases (PDS), sufficient electoral success or influence in the party system to shape the German political agenda. These are no small accomplishments for any regionalist party.

This article has focused on the main factors explaining the success of these parties in the FRG. We tested a number of hypotheses put forward by Tarrow and Müller-Rommell regarding the internal and external resources necessary for regionalist party success. We found that strong leadership was an particularly important factor, whereby the shrewd and charismatic Franz Josef Strauss and Gregor Gysi were especially adept at arousing deep emotions among the Bavarian and eastern German electorate, constructing an image of Bavaria and eastern Germany that resonated with the voters, and seeking to stake out a place for Bavarian and eastern German interests in federal politics. A second important factor was organizational strength and the consolidation of a core membership base, which hastened the CSU's transition to a catch-all party in the late 1950s and the PDS's impressive growth in the 1990s. The existence of regional electoral arenas also enabled the two parties to gain a foothold at this level (which has been a problem for regionalist parties in, say, centralized France). Yet, two of the key determinants of these parties' success were found outside this body of literature. First, the expansion, consolidation and influence of these parties had much to do with their ability to develop a federal profile in addition to their regionalist character. A second factor was the inability of state-wide parties to compete with the CSU and PDS in their home territories. Parties such as the SPD, CDU, FDP and Greens were unable develop a convincing territorial narrative of Bavaria or eastern Germany, or to position themselves as standing up for the interests of these regions.

At the same time, we found that there are also important differences between the two parties in how they have pursued and maintained their success. While the CSU developed a partnership with the CDU in the early years of the federal republic at a time when the German party was just taking shape, the PDS was a latecomer to the German political scene and did not have the same opportunities to develop a similar type of alliance with, say, the SPD (whereby the PDS could have restricted its activities to the eastern *Länder* while the SPD could have focused on the west). Instead, the PDS – realizing the

limitations of being able to represent only one territorial constituency – forged an alliance with the West German Electoral Alternative for Labour and Social Justice (WASG) to become a pan-German party fighting federal elections. The two parties also vary in the way in which they have captured the vote in their respective territories: while the PDS articulated a discourse of exclusion and dominance by the west, the CSU focused on its entitlement to special treatment and influence in the FRG due to its historical traditions of statehood, cultural identity and economic might. This latter factor, of course, relates to the ideological profile and core demands of the parties whereby the CSU has developed an autonomist regionalism based on a historical-cultural construction of the region or nation while the PDS has advanced a protectionist regionalism focused on strengthening the socio-economic status of the region.

The changing nature of the German party system has provided these two parties with a number of opportunities as well as challenges. PDS politicians must now find a programmatic and strategic compromise with those from the WASG within the new Left Party, ensuring that recent electoral successes in the western states are maintained without neglecting the eastern German heartland. For the CSU, its loss of votes to the Free Voters Party during the 2008 election, which forced it into a governing coalition with the Free Democrats and damaged its relationship with the CDU, constitutes a new and uncharted phase in its history. The CSU must find a way to re-energize its image to appeal to young voters who were disenchanted with the party's traditionalist message, its weak leadership and its recent policy debacles. Both parties therefore have to consider how to adapt their message to address the pan-German (indeed, pan-European) problems of electoral volatility, disenfranchisement and popular distrust of mainstream politics. Despite these setbacks, the electoral and political success of these parties puts to rest the hypothesis that regionalist parties are inconsequential 'niche' actors whose demise is an inevitable consequence of modernization.⁴⁷ As this article has shown, territory and regionalism are, and will remain, remarkably resilient mobilizing issues in post-war Germany.

⁴⁷ S. M. Lipset, *Consensus and Conflict: Essays in Political Sociology*, New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction, 1985; B. M. Meguid, 'Competition between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success', *American Political Science Review*, 99: 3 (2005), pp. 347–59.